



Download photos [HERE](#)

photo caption & credit included in file names

### For Immediate Release

PRESS CONTACT: Libby Huebner, 562.208.7993, [libby@adlibpr.com](mailto:libby@adlibpr.com)

**Sierra Madre Playhouse Caps  
Lunar New Year Celebration with Terrence McNally’s  
Tony Award-Winning Play “Master Class,”  
Directed by Tim Dang and Featuring Broadway Star Joan Almedilla as Maria Callas  
February 14 to March 9, 2025, at Sierra Madre Playhouse**

(Sierra Madre, CA – January 22, 2025) – **Sierra Madre Playhouse** wraps its captivating multi-week Lunar New Year celebration with Terrence McNally’s Tony Award-winning play *Master Class*, a gripping theatrical production inspired by the legendary masterclasses presented by iconic opera diva Maria Callas at Juilliard at the end of her career. Directed by **Tim Dang** and featuring Philippine-born Broadway star **Joan Almedilla** (*Miss Saigon*, *Les Miserable*, *The King and I*) as Maria Callas, the show runs for 16 performances from February 14 through March 9, 2025, at the historic Sierra Madre Playhouse.

Callas, in the play, commands the stage in a Juilliard masterclass where she offers cutting, humorous, and deeply insightful critiques to her eager-to-please students. While guiding her pupils – each with their own hopes and flaws – Callas reflects on her triumphs and tragedies, from her metamorphosis as a star to her volatile relationship with Aristotle Onassis. Through sharp wit and raw vulnerability, Callas reveals the personal and professional sacrifices required to pursue greatness. Her impassioned teachings and poignant reflections, remind us of the profound impact that art can have on individuals and society.

“Because Maria Callas’ artistry transcends cultures and continues to inspire people around the globe, *Master Class* provides a particularly poignant culmination to our Lunar New Year festival, which embraces the shared values that unite us all,” says Sierra Madre Playhouse Artistic and Executive Director Matt Cook. “Tim Dang, a superb director who creates transformative theatrical landscapes, and the entire cast, led by Joan Almedilla, who vividly embodies Maria Callas, infuse the production with tremendous humanity. The production also reflects Sierra Madre Playhouse’s commitment to offering a rich tapestry of programming for

Lunar New Year that highlights how the themes of renewal and unity resonate within and beyond the broader Asian and Asian American communities.”

In addition to Almedilla, the cast includes Korean American soprano **Joanna Kim** (Sophie; 1st Soprano); actress **Francesca Ling** (Sharon; 2nd Soprano); opera singer **Kurt Kanazawa** (Tony; Tenor); composer/conductor/pianist **Joshua Foy** (Music Director/Manny, The Accompanist); Mexican American singer/actor **Ricardo Mota** (Stagehand/Tony understudy); Filipina-American vocalist **Mariah Rae** (Sophie & Sharon understudy); **Kit DeZolt** (Stagehand understudy).

Almedilla has been hailed as a “phenomenal diva” (*Deadline*). In addition to her celebrated theatrical career, she has appeared in such films as *Shatter Belt*, *Pam & Tommy*, and *Commencement*.

Dang, of Chinese American descent and originally from Hawaii, served as the artistic director of East West Players from 1993 to 2016. He has also directed productions at Singapore Repertory Theatre, San Francisco’s Asian American Theater Company, and the PanAsian Repertory Theatre in New York, among others.

The show times are Fridays, at 8 pm; Saturdays at 2 pm and 8 pm; and Sundays at 4 pm. (Full schedule: Friday, February 14, 8 pm; Saturday, February 15, 2 pm and 8 pm; Sunday, February 16, 4 pm; Friday, February 21, 8 pm; Saturday, February 22, 2 pm and 8 pm; Sunday, February 23, 4 pm; Friday, February 28, 8 pm; Saturday, March 1, 2 pm and 8 pm; Sunday, March 2, 4 pm; Friday, March 7, 8 pm; Saturday, March 8, 2 pm and 8 pm; Sunday, March 9, 4 pm.)

Tickets (\$12 - \$45) are on sale now. For tickets and information, please call 626.355.4318 or visit [www.sierramadreplayhouse.org](http://www.sierramadreplayhouse.org). Sierra Madre Playhouse is located at 87 West Sierra Madre Boulevard, Sierra Madre, CA 91024.

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

**Joan Almedilla** (Maria Callas): Joan Almedilla is grateful for the opportunity to play Maria Callas. Broadway, national tour and some of her regional credits include: *Miss Saigon* (Kim), *Les Miserables* (Fantine), *The King and I* (Lady Thiang), *Jesus Christ Superstar* (Mary cover) *Mamma Mia* (Donna), *Assassins* (Sara Jane Moore), *Chess* (Florence), *South Pacific* (Bloody Mary) She has performed at Carnegie Hall, Disney Concert Hall and The Apollo Theater. Her film and TV include *Pam and Tommy*, *Bupkis*, *Mayans FX*, *Griselda*, *Commencement* movie, *Shatter Belt Series*. She thanks CTG, Shushu Entertainment, Tim Dang and everyone at Sierra Madre Playhouse. Her performance is dedicated to her dad and my mentor, Allen Savage. [www.joanalmedilla.com](http://www.joanalmedilla.com)

**Joanna Kim** (Sophie; 1<sup>st</sup> soprano): Last season, Korean-American, soprano, Joanna Kim sang the role of the Son in *The Juniper Tree* by Philip Glass and Robert Moran at USC Thornton School of Music. During her time as a student, she

performed the partial role of Norina in *Don Pasquale* and Zerlina in *Don Giovanni* with USC Opera. She also performed in a concert presentation of *Star Singer* by Juhi Bansal with Beth Morrison Project. Kim was a Resident Artist at Opera North, playing the role of Diana in *Orphée aux enfers*, Cinderella in *Into the Woods*, Countess Ceprano, Page (jump-in) and Gilda (cover) in *Rigoletto*. Notable roles from her undergraduate studies at the New England Conservatory (NEC) comprise of Amore in *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, Amahl in Amahl in the *Night Visitors*, and partial roles of Despina in *Così fan tutte*, Ilia in *Idomeneo*, Mlle. Silberklang in *Der Schauspieldirektor*, and Lakmé in *Lakmé*. She was also the soprano soloist in Handel's *Messiah* with the New England Conservatory Chamber Singers and Mendelssohn's *Hear My Prayer/Wings of a Dove* with Harvard Pro Musica. Kim has been a finalist in the Opera Guild Vocal Competition, Carolyn Bailey and Dominick Argento Vocal Competition, and Classical Singer Competition (Young Artist Division). She has also been featured numerous video game soundtracks, including the multi-award-winning video game *Lies of P*. She can be heard on the solo track, "Arche Abbey," streaming on all online platforms. She also appears in the viral Korean YouTube variety show, *UMAGAME*, singing in the original television soundtrack. Kim received a Master's Degree in Music in Vocal Arts from USC's Thornton School of Music, studying under the tutelage of Lynn Holding and Patti Thom. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Music with a Vocal Performance and Music Education Concentration from the New England Conservatory of Music.

**Francesca Ling** (Sharon; 2<sup>nd</sup> soprano): Francesca Ling is an actress, singer, and director. Her recent TV guest star credits include *CSI: Vegas*, *Hawaii Five-0*, *Intelligence*, and a recurring role on *God Friended Me* for CBS. Her theatre credits include *West Side Story* (Maria), *Anything Goes!* (Hope Harcourt), *My Fair Lady* (Eliza Doolittle), and most recently *The King And I* (Anna Leonowens) understudying Broadway vet Anastasia Barzee at The La Mirada Theatre For The Performing Arts. Ling has a degree in acting and musical theater from The University of Southern California. She is an alumnus of The British American Drama Academy. She currently studies voice with Cathy Wallace. Ling made her directing debut on the film *Lacktate*, which is currently on the festival circuit. *Master Class* marks Ling's Sierra Madre Playhouse debut.

**Kurt Kanazawa** (Tony; tenor): Kurt Kanazawa is an accomplished actor and opera singer. A graduate of The Juilliard School, Manhattan School of Music, and Columbia University, he recently played the Fisherman in the critically acclaimed production of Stephen Sondheim's "Pacific Overtures" at East West Players, directed by Tim Dang. He's thrilled to return to Sierra Madre Playhouse, since last appearing in Y. York's "Nothing is the Same," also directed by Tim Dang. His off-Broadway credits include his solo show "L'OPERA!" at Pan Asian Repertory. Regional credits include Los Angeles LGBT Center, Rogue Artists, Detroit Public Theatre, BBC, LATW, Boston Court Pasadena, Artists At Play, Ojai Playwrights Conference. He has appeared on TV/film in "Grey's Anatomy," "Bosch: Legacy," "The Lincoln Lawyer," "A Life in Pieces: the Diary and Letters of Stanley Hayami" (Tribeca), "No No Girl." Opera: New World Symphony, The Industry-LA, NCPA-Beijing, Teatro Colón.

**Joshua Foy** (Music Director/Manny, the accompanist): Joshua Foy is a composer, conductor, pianist, and educator in Southern California. Foy composed and directed the music for the theater production *Piedra del Sol* by director and playwright Maria Morett, which was staged at the Getty Villa. He was also the music director for the original musical *In Bermuda!* by playwright David LARGMAN Murray and composer Bobby Halvorson, which featured actors Bryce Dallas Howard and Josh Gad. Foy has written music in a variety of genres, including film scores to *The Newest Pledge*, and *(Romance) in the Digital Age*. Joshua has recently conducted the west coast premiere of Leslie Burrs' "I Can't Breathe" and conducted a fascinating iteration of Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, both with the Pacific Opera Project (POP) in Los Angeles. His piece *Couplet for String Orchestra* will premiere with the Black Pearl Chamber Orchestra in May. He is also an orchestrator, arranger, transcriber, and copyist. Foy is currently a professor of music theory and history at the Young Americans College of the Performing Arts

**Ricardo Mota** (Stagehand/Tony understudy): Mexican-American singer and actor Ricardo Mota holds a degree in Voice Performance from University of Veracruz and attended Bowling Green State University in Ohio. He has performed in music festivals in Mexico, USA, Italy, and Bulgaria. His operatic roles include Tebaldo in *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, Monsier Vogelsang in *The Impresario*, Basilio/Don Curzio in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Ferrando in *Così Fan Tutte*, Tamino in *The Magic Flute*, Rinuccio in *Gianni Schicchi*, and Rodolfo in *La Bohème*. Mota's recent co-star credits include the pilot "Sincerely, Management" and his first movie "In Memoriam," directed by Rob Burnett. Ricardo is making his debut in both of these roles as well as at Sierra Madre Playhouse.

**Mariah Rae** (Sophie & Sharon understudy): Mariah Rae is a Filipina-American vocalist from Portland, Oregon currently based in the Los Angeles area. This production marks her Sierra Madre Playhouse debut. Often praised for her sharp musicianship and theatrical instincts, Rae began studying musical theatre and piano at a young age and subsequently studied classical voice. She has appeared with Pacific Opera Project, N.E.O. Voice Festival through the Resonance Collective, Lyric Opera of Orange County, Goode Time Productions, and Overtone Industries, and is a part of vocal groups such as the GRAMMY-winning ensemble Tonality, Long Beach Camerata Singers, Terpsichor, and Adoro Ensemble. Through Tonality, she was a featured soloist with the Kronos Quartet for Michael Abels' *At War With Ourselves*, and sang on Björk's Cornucopia West Coast tour, Lina Lapelyte's *Sun & Sea* opera, Michael Giacchino's *Society of the Snow*, and the 2024 GRAMMY®-winning album *So She Howls* by Carla Patullo. Her roles have included Gianetta in *Don Bucefalo*, Suor Genovieffa in *Suor Angelica*, Papagena in *The Magic Flute*, Soeur Constance in *Dialogues des Carmélites*, Susanna in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Adina in *L'elisir d'amore*, Laetitia in *The Old Maid and the Thief*, and Lauretta in *Gianni Schicchi*, Polyxena in *Cynosemma*, Ronnette in *Little Shop of Horrors*, Nehebka/Aida understudy in *Aida*, and Star to Be in *Annie the Musical*. Rae earned a Master of Music in

Opera Performance from the Bob Cole Conservatory of Music (BCCM) at California State University Long Beach and received a Bachelor of Arts in Vocal Performance and Journalism from Loyola Marymount University (LMU).

**Kit DeZolt** (Stagehand understudy): Kit DeZolt's film credits include *Confessions of a Teenage Jesus Jerk* (Kien), *Moon Manor* (Nox), *Making YouTube* (Steve Chen), and *Pride Weekend* (Sweetie). His TV credits include *Generation*, *To Tell the Truth*, *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*, *Citizen* (pilot), and *A Plan to Kill*. He has provided English dubbing for *The King's Affection* (Prince Jehyeon) and *Veneno* (Chenta/Joaquín). His stage credits include the *Baby Shark Live* North American Tour (Hogi), *Blippi The Wonderful World* International & North American Tours (Dancer), and East West Players' *Pacific Overtures* (Commodore Perry). He performed stand-up in *Laugh Proud* and sang on the soundtracks for *Danny & The Darkness* and *Still Waiting in the Wings*. Kit graduated Summa Cum Laude in Theatre from Loyola Marymount. His first job in L.A. was playing a condom.

**Tim Dang** (director): Tim is thrilled to direct *MASTER CLASS* having previously directed three other productions at Sierra Madre Playhouse: *NOTHING IS THE SAME*, *THE JOY LUCK CLUB*, and *KING OF THE YEES*. He recently directed *PACIFIC OVERTURES* by Stephen Sondheim and John Weidman at East West Players, which received critical acclaim and a sold-out run. Dang's career has spanned over four decades as theater director and producer, arts administrator, cultural diversity and equity advocate, adjunct lecturer, writer, and performer. He is the recipient of the Society of Directors and Choreographers' Zelda Fichandler Award for transforming the regional theatre arts landscape through theatre. He is producing artistic director emeritus of East West Players (EWP), having run the company for 23 years from 1993 through 2016. He served four years as an LA County Arts Commissioner appointed by Supervisor Hilda Solis. Dang also taught at the USC School of Dramatic Arts and AMDA College for the Performing Arts.

## **ABOUT SIERRA MADRE PLAYHOUSE**

**Sierra Madre Playhouse**, a vibrant Southern California cultural hub with a rich history spanning a century, energizes audiences and the community with distinctive theatrical productions and captivating live performances. Hailed as a "jewel" (*Pasadena Weekly*) and "a landmark theater" (*ABC7 Los Angeles*), the performing arts center has garnered tremendous accolades for its varied repertoire and thought-provoking education and outreach programs curated with social impact in mind. The *Los Angeles Times* proclaims, "This is theater from the heart." As one of San Gabriel Valley's only performing arts center presenting a broad spectrum of performance genres, including theater, music, dance, film, comedy, and family-friendly productions featuring eminent local and national professional artists, the treasured artistic beacon draws audiences from across the Southland. The intimate 99-seat Sierra Madre Playhouse offers an up-close and personal connection to performances that resonate deeply, earning multiple Ovation Awards, NAACP Awards, and LA Times Critics' Choice honors. It is nestled into a historic building on the inviting Main Street of Sierra Madre, a charming village in the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains. Retaining its distinctive movie theater façade and instantly recognizable marquee, the structure has undergone numerous transformations since opening in 1910, from furniture emporium to silent movie theatre to the artistic institution that now stands as a vibrant embodiment of the region's rich cultural legacy. The Sierra Madre Playhouse fosters creativity that aspires to bridge divides and spark dialogue, all while celebrating the rich tapestry of the American experience and the enduring pursuit of shared understanding.

## **EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:**

### **WHAT:**

**Sierra Madre Playhouse Caps Lunar New Year Celebration with Terrence McNally's Tony Award-Winning Play "Master Class"**

Tim Dang, Director

### **CAST:**

Joan Almedilla (Maria Callas)  
Joanna Kim (Sophie; 1<sup>st</sup> soprano)  
Francesca Ling (Sharon; 2<sup>nd</sup> soprano)  
Kurt Kanazawa (Tony; tenor)  
Joshua Foy (Music Director/Manny, the accompanist)  
Ricardo Mota (Stagehand/Tony understudy)  
Mariah Rae (Sophie & Sharon understudy)  
Kit DeZolt (Stagehand understudy)

**WHERE:**

Sierra Madre Playhouse  
87 West Sierra Madre Boulevard  
Sierra Madre, CA 91024

**TICKETS AND INFORMATION:**

\$12 - \$45

(626) 355-4318

[www.sierramadreplayhouse.org](http://www.sierramadreplayhouse.org)

**WHEN:**

**February 14 – March 9, 2025**

Friday, February 14, 8 pm

Saturday, February 15, 2 pm and 8 pm

Sunday, February 16, 4 pm

Friday, February 21, 8 pm

Saturday, February 22, 2 pm and 8 pm

Sunday, February 23, 4 pm

Friday, February 28, 8 pm

Saturday, March 1, 2 pm and 8 pm

Sunday, March 2, 4 pm

Friday, March 7, 8 pm

Saturday, March 8, 2 pm and 8 pm

Sunday, March 9, 4 pm

###